DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 073 SO 007 150

AUTHOR Suzuki, Michael G.
TITLE Differences Between Self-Concepts of Mennonite Adolescents and Public School Adolescents.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Aspiration; Comparative Analysis; *Educational Research; Grade 12; Religious Factors; School Surveys; *Self Concept; *Self Evaluation; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Mennonites

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out if there were any significant differences between the self-concepts of Mennonite adolescents and public school adolescents. Twenty-five Mennonite adolescents and twenty-five public school adolescents, all of whom were twelfth-graders, were given a self-description inventory in which they were to answer sets of items as to a) what they thought they are really like (the actual self); b) how they thought they ought to be (the ideal self); and c) how they thought the typical adolescent in their age group would rate himself. It is noted that definite conclusions should not be made from the results since such factors as the adolescent's candor, insight, and attitudes may influence the way in which he responds to the items. The comparative results tend to show that there is actually not much difference between the self-concepts of the Mennonite and the public school adolescents. Several significant items noted in the various self-descriptions indicate that: public school adolescents are more socially oriented than their Mennonite counter-parts; Mennonite adolescents stress religion more than the public school adolescents; public school students desire to be All-American, well-rounded individuals, whereas the Mennonites are nonconformers; the majority of both groups plan to go to college; and significantly more public school students than Mennonites hope to move from their community after completing school. (Author/RM)

ED 090073

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPTS OF ADOLESCENTS ATTENDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Lionel P. Zerbib

Summary: The present study investigated differences between self-concepts of adolescents attending a private school and those attending a public school. Subjects were 60 students (30 boys and 30 girls) in the 10th grade, 30 from a private school and 30 from a public school. Each subject was administered the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Results indicated that the private school students had significantly higher self-concepts than the public school students. Implications for the role of the school environment in the development of the self-concept are discussed.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Bracken (2) has noted that when a person undertakes the task of evaluating himself, whatever the nature of this evaluation, he inevitably makes reference to a system of central meanings that he has about himself and his relations to the world about him which we call the self-concept. Every evaluative statement a person makes about himself may be thought of as a sample of his self-concept, from which may be inferred certain properties of that self-concept. Thus, a young person's idea and attitude regarding himself influence and are influenced by his response to everything that happens during adolescence.

The adolescent's self is the essence of his existence as known to him. The self as known includes all the ideas and feelings a person has regarding the properties of his body, the qualities of his mind and his personal characteristics. It includes his beliefs, values, and convictions. It embodies the conception he has of his past, of his background, and of his future prospects (10).

It is implied, however, that the known descriptions of the self (i.e., a person's view of himself) does not give a full accounting of what one is and how one came to be that way. It is actually a person's own subjective evaluation. It represents his convictions, what he knows or thinks he knows about his make-up, not what he has forgotten or is unable to perceive.

Although adolescents are usually silent about their private thoughts and feelings they do reveal themselves in a variety of ways, besides diaries, autobiographies, casual conversations, etc., self description inventories have been devised to measure aspects of the self-concept. Rogers(10) and Brownfain (2), for example, have revealed that when subjects are asked to do a sorts of self-referent items under instructions to sort them so that they describe themselves as they are at present and then again so that they describe their concept of the ideal person, the correlation between these two sorts seems to vary with the severity of maladjustment.

Several studies have investigated the possible discrepancies between self-concepts of religious and racial groups. Stark and Lebeck (12) found significant differences in self-concepts between two religious groups, the Catholics and the Jews. Nebunsk and Gruther (7) noted that Negro students obtained higher dominance and love scores than white students for self ratings but lower scores on ideal descriptions. Lotchy (10) has also indicated that U.S. children tend to be less sacrosanct about parental authority and values than Vietnamese children.

Because of the Mennonite Church's rather stringent rules involving church membership and social interaction (9), it was the purpose of this study to find out, by means of a self-description inventory, if

there were any significant differences between the self-concepts of the Mennonite adolescents and the public school adolescents. It was also hypothesized that the Mennonite adolescents would answer the items in a more intervalidate or less appealing manner than would the public school adolescents. Hypothesis (3) has noted the various restrictive acts put forth by the Mennonite Church. Generally, some of these acts prohibit members from holding membership in lodges or secret societies; prohibiting members from obtaining insurance or from joining unions or business organizations; prohibiting extravagant spending; and in-group restrictions and controls over personal conduct. It should be pointed out, however, that in practice the various Mennonite branches vary considerably. Nevertheless, it was assumed by the investigator that the Mennonite's emphasis and stressing of moral rights more perfect plans for eternal reward as well as their high religious values.

What are the Mennonites?

The Mennonites are a religious sect who consider themselves evangelical Christians. They trace their origins as Protestants to the early Reform time Days, claiming 1525 as the birth of the church. They were considered the left wing of the Zwinglian movement in Switzerland and because of severe disagreement with Zwingli the radicals, who call themselves brethren, broke completely with the Swiss reformer. They were soon called Anabaptists and became the victims of severe persecution because of their faith and practice(6).

Outstanding among their tenets of faith were complete separation of church and state; the practice of baptism only upon confession of faith which did not allow for infant baptism; considering the sacraments as only symbols of spiritual truth; nonresistance as a way of life;

nonconformity to the world; the simple life; salvation only through faith in Christ; and the authority of the Scripture (6).

Because of the severe persecution they encountered during the first two and a half centuries the church was scattered over Europe, and many found refuge in America. As a result, there are many different groups of Mennonites in America today. Hartzler (9) has pointed out that there are three significant tendencies among the Mennonites of America. One is toward the extreme conservatism--a kind of conservatism which demands uniformity in faith and conformity in action and conduct to the loss of freedom in both thought and action. There is a second tendency, namely, toward a more liberal philosophy of life. Here, "the urbanization of the rural mind through the telephone, daily newspapers and farm journals, rural mail service, radio and the automobile has brought about a changed mental and religious attitude much to the perplexity of the older leadership." A third tendency is that of a closer union between the several branches of the denomination. Conferences and commissions do much to bring the branches together into closer cooperative relationships.

According to Peters (15), one of the most important tenets of the Mennonite faith is a belief in "separation from the world." Very often this belief was interpreted as an injunction to avoid all contacts with the non-Mennonite society. To escape the influence of the world, Mennonites have undertaken migrations to new and undeveloped areas in various parts of the world. In America, most of the Mennonites populate the Midwestern states such as Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Nebraska. With few new areas to move to, the Mennonites have been forced into a pattern of acculturation. Through education

they are attempting to maintain some of the cherished ideals and traditions which have characterized them through the centuries.

METHOD

Subjects: The subjects consisted of twenty-five 12th grade, Senior high school students from Mid-Prairie High School, Wellman, Iowa, and twenty-five 12th grade, Senior high school students from the Iowa Mennonite School, Kalona, Iowa. Both schools are situated in rural, farming communities which are isolated from any metropolitan area of the state. The Mennonite group predominantly represents a branch called the Mennonite Church who generally possess the most moderate attitudes toward outsiders. The classes for which the inventory was to be administered was arranged by the principals of the two schools. The inventory was administered during an English Literature class and an activity period for the public school students and Mennonite students respectively.

Procedure: The self-description inventory consisted of three sections. Each section contained forty-five self-descriptive items which were repeated throughout the three sections. Most of the items were derived from the Adjective Check List (3) and an Interpersonal Check List devised by Leary (1). The remaining items were devised by the investigator. In determining the internal consistency of the items, the split-half technique was carried out by correlating the odd-numbered items with the even-numbered items. By using the Spearman-Brown formula, an estimate of the full-length reliability turned out to be .86. In addition to the forty-five items, four questions were also presented to the students in order to gain further insight into their self-concepts.

Each student was given a direction sheet along with the inventory. The directions were as follows:

1. The following pages contain a self-description inventory. It is divided into three sections-two pages for each section.
2. On the first two pages, you are to answer the statement as candidly (or truthfully) as possible as to how you are really like (your "actual" self). This is done by placing a check mark in the appropriate space and column which you think best describes your actual self.
3. The next two pages are to be answered in the same manner except that you are to answer the statements as to how you think you ought to be or desire to be (your "ideal" self).
4. The concluding pages are also answered in the same manner except that you are to answer the statements as to how you think the typical adolescent in your age group would rate himself. After this has been completed you are to then answer the questions below on page two.
5. Please do not look back or compare your answers on the previous pages. Only refer to the direction sheet to clarify your responses. Remember, answer the items as truthfully as you can.

The students were not informed on the actual purpose of the study since it was felt that they would present a more unrealistic appraisal of themselves if they had known that their results would be compared with the results of another group.

In computing the inventory statistical data, an individual item analysis was done. First, a tabulation sheet was devised for each section and the responses (or check marks) from both groups were separately totaled for each item and placed in their appropriate columns (that is, Not at all, To some degree, or To a great degree). Percentages for each statement from both groups were then calculated. The percentage calculated represented the number or percent of students who responded to a certain degree. Percentages were also calculated for the question results in the same manner.

From the columns, the largest discrepancy between the two groups of percentages for each item were then used to calculate z-scores in order to find which items significantly differentiated between the Mennonite and the public school adolescents. The following proportion formula was used in calculating z-scores:

$$z = \frac{P_1 - P_2}{\sqrt{\frac{PQ\ (N_1 + N_2)}{N_1 N_2}}}$$

Where: P_1 = the percentage response for the Mennonite adolescent

P_2 = the percentage response for the public school adolescent

N_1 = the number of students which constitutes the sample of Mennonite adolescents

N_2 = the number of students which constitutes the sample of public school adolescents

$$P = \frac{N_1 P_1 + N_2 P_2}{N_1 + N_2}$$

$$Q = 1 - P$$

Since N = 25, .05 = 1.96 and .01 = 2.58, the extent of significance was placed at the following levels. When z was less than $\pm$ 1.96 (5% level of significance), the difference between the percentage responses for a certain item made by both groups would be not significant (or ns). If z was greater than $\pm$ 2.58 (1% level of significance) then the difference would be regarded as significant (or s). However, should z lie between $\pm$ 1.96 and $\pm$ 2.58 the difference is regarded as one of doubtful significance (or ds).

RESULTS

Table I

z-Scores for Significant Items on the Actual Self of Mennonite and Public School Adolescents

Item	z-score
11. I am happy and cheerful	** -3.10 (s)
14. I am friendly	* -2.32 (ds)
16. I am attracted to my gang (of the same sex)	* -2.01 (ds)
17. I like responsibility	** -2.59 (s)
24. I am approved by my peers	** -2.59 (s)
33. I am easy-going	** -2.69 (s)
40. I am religious	* +1.98 (ds)

(s) = significant
(ds) = doubtful significance
* = significant at the 5% level
** = significant at the 1% level

Table I reports the z-scores for significant items regarding the actual selves of Mennonite and public school adolescents. From the results, z-scores with negative signs indicate a majority response made by the public school adolescents which differentiated them from the Mennonite adolescents. In contrast, z-scores with positive signs indicate a majority response made by the Mennonite adolescents.

The results from Table I indicate that the public school adolescents have answered the significant items in a more agreeing manner when describing their "actual" selves. It appears that they are more socially oriented than their Mennonite counterparts. That is, they tend to be more group oriented and tend to strive for harmonious peer relationships. The public school adolescents also appear to be quite satisfied

with life--they seem happy, friendly, and relaxed. The Mennonites, on the other hand, appear to stress religion more than the public school adolescents. This, in a way, could be expected since they do represent a religious sect and also attend a parochial school.

In comparing the total item response by both groups, it was found that the public school adolescents responded to 62 percent of the items in a more favorable manner as compared to 34 percent for the Mennonites. That is, the majority tended to perceive themselves as being generous, honest, helpful, etc. 4 percent of the items were answered equally by both groups.

Table II

z-Scores for Significant Items on the Ideal Self of Mennonite and Public School Adolescents

	Item	z-score
5.	I get impatient with others' mistakes	** -2.59 (s)
12.	I am satisfied with life	** -2.90 (s)
16.	I am attracted to my gang (of the same sex)	* -2.57 (ds)
19.	I am competitive (for grades, activities, etc.)	* -2.44 (ds)
24.	I am approved by my peers	** -2.91 (s)
33.	I am easy-going	** -2.83 (s)
34.	I answer questions with a Yes or No	* +2.30 (s)
36.	I eagerly look forward to the future--there I see contentment and security	* -2.09 (ds)
40.	I am religious	* +2.04 (ds)

(s) = significant
(ds) = doubtful significance
* = significant at the 5% level
** = significant at the 1% level

The results from Table II indicate that the public school adolescents have again answered the significant items in a more agreeing manner when describing their "ideal" selves. They depict their ideal selves as being patient and good-natured. They also stress harmonious

relationships with their peers as being ideal while at the same time striving to emulate others by grades or activities of some sort. In essence, they desire to be "All-American" adolescents--they want to be or think they ought to be well-rounded individuals who socialize well with everyone. The Mennonite adolescents, on the other hand, show that they desire to be less socially oriented than the public school adolescents. They apparently are nonconformers which tend to support Guengerich's (6) observation concerning their tenets of faith. They seem to want to be more exact in their outlook on life and also appear more cautious in expressing optimism about the future. Evidently, being an All-American adolescent is not the most important thing that they strive for. They, again, emphasize religion as a significant part of their self-concept. The total item response for both groups revealed that 49 percent of the public school adolescents responded in a more favorable manner while 39 percent of the Mennonites did likewise. 12 percent of the items were equally answered by both groups.

Table III

z-Scores for Significant Items on the Typical Adolescent of Mennonite and Public School Adolescents

	Item	z-score
4.	I get rebellious towards parents	* +1.98 (ds)
9.	I am attractive	* -2.23 (ds)
19.	I am competitive (for grades, activities, etc.)	* +2.52 (ds)
21.	I have a tendency to reject myself	* -2.01 (ds)
22.	I feel insecure	* -1.98 (ds)
31.	This is a man's world	* +2.20 (ds)
41.	I am cooperative with others	* -2.12 (ds)
44.	I am sociable and neighborly	* -2.09 (ds)

(ds) = doubtful significance * = significant at the 5% lev

As noted in Table II, there were no significant items at the 1 percent level of confidence. This would indicate that both groups

responded to the items in describing the typical adolescent in approximately the same manner. Apparently, the public school adolescents placed the typical adolescent in a more favorable light than did the Mennonite adolescents. According to the public school adolescents, the typical adolescent is self-accepting as well as being cooperative and sociable with others. A check on the total item response by both groups for the typical adolescent showed that 58 percent of the public school adolescents responded in a more favorable manner while 29 percent of the Mennonites did likewise. 13 percent of the items were equally answered by both groups.

The question results can be found in Table IV. Generally, the future plans for both groups are alike. Most of them plan to attend college and most hope to go into the teaching profession. This high rate of professional preference is probably due to the fact that the majority of the students from both groups are in the college-preparatory curriculum. However, it is rather interesting to note that significantly more public school adolescents than Mennonite adolescents hope to move from their community after completing school. Also, on question four, a number of the Mennonites stressed religion as the most satisfactory aspect of their life while over half of the public school adolescents stressed inter or intrapersonal relationships as being most satisfactory to them. There appeared to be no significant differences in the Least satisfaction category.

Table IV

Questionnaire Results of Mennonite and Public School Adolescents

1. Do you plan to attend college after graduation?
   Mennonite adolescents (N = 25)
   84% going to college
   12% not going to college
   4% going to trade school

Table IV (cont'd)

Mid-Prairie High adolescents (N = 25)

100% going to college

2. What is your future vocational choice?

Mennonite adolescents (N = 25)

72% Professional
4% Semiprofessional
12% Skilled
12% Undecided

Mid-Prairie High adolescents (N = 25)

84% Professional
8% Skilled
8% Undecided

3. Do you plan to work in your community after school? If not, where would you move to?

Mennonite adolescents (N = 25)

44% will remain in the community
32% will move from community (all desired the West Coast)
24% Undecided

Mid-Prairie High adolescents (N = 25)

12% will remain in the community
76% will move from community (61% desired the West Coast and 39% preferred the Midwest)
12% Undecided

4. From what aspect in your life do you derive most satisfaction? Least satisfaction?

Mennonite adolescents (N = 25)

32% religious aspect
28% scholastic and task achievement
32% inter or intrapersonal relationships
8% extracurricular activities

Least satisfaction?

20% idleness
28% being hypocritical
16% unsatisfactory scholastic achievement
12% authority domination
24% others

Mid-Prairie High adolescents (N = 25)

0% religious aspect
24% scholastic and task achievement
52% inter or intrapersonal relationships
16% extracurricular activities
8% others

Table IV (cont'd)

Least satisfaction?

32% idleness
20% being hypocritical
28% unsatisfactory scholastic achievement
0% authority domination
20% others

DISCUSSION

In support of the aforementioned hypothesis, the public school adolescents had answered the items in a more favorable or agreeing manner. They tended to perceive themselves, their ideal selves, and the typical adolescent as being well rounded individuals. In describing their self-concepts they tended to emphasize peer approval, adequate self-identity and acceptance, happiness, and an optimistic point of view toward the future more so than the Mennonite adolescents. The Mennonites, on the other hand, tended to respond to the items in a more intermediate manner. They did, however, stress religiousness as being significant in their "actual" and "ideal" self-concepts. Peters (15) has found, upon administering the Allport, Vernon and Lindzey Study of Values scale, that Mennonite college students scored significantly lower in theoretical and political values. Seemingly, their religious background and their attendance at a parochial school play a major part in influencing their responses.

The majority of both groups plan to go to college. Apparently, both groups have realized the importance of higher education in this ever-competing society. For the Mennonites, the number headed for college represents a considerable increase from the Class of 1952. According to Nafziger (14), 38.5 percent of the students at the Iowa Mennonite School (N = 18) desired to attend a four-year university or junior college in 1952 as compared to 84 percent of this group under study. Thus, one

can infer that the Mennonite adolescents do have as much ambition towards obtaining a higher education as do the public school adolescents. The majority of the Mennonites, however, attend one of three private Mennonite colleges: Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana; Hesston College in Hesston, Kansas; and the Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisburg, Virginia.

Nafziger (14) has also found that in the Class of 1952, 27.5 percent of the Mennonite students desired to go into professional work. Lembright and Yamamoto (13) found, in their sample of Amish children (belonging to a branch of the Mennonites which tends strictly to adhere to the Church's rules and disciplines), that only 5 percent of them desired professional occupations. The present group of Mennonites, on the other hand, had a percentage of 72 percent which represents a considerable difference from the other two groups. It is apparent here that there is a marked difference in attitudes between the Mennonite adolescents and the Amish adolescents. Lembright and Yamamoto (13) have noted that the "Amish community provides a highly homogeneous and sharply delineated world for children to live and grow in. Everything has its place and everybody knows precisely what he is expected to do and who he is expected to be....In a sense, such a world is highly restricted and not conducive to free wheeling development and exploration of ideas and to highly competitive interpersonal relations."

The fact that more Mennonite adolescents than public school adolescents prefer to remain in the community probably stems from their common family ties and religious background in which the basic Mennonite doctrine of "separation from the world" is possibly implemented in their daily lives. This could possibly explain why the Mennonite adolescents

are less socially oriented. Peters (15) has indicated in his study that Mennonite students do show tendencies to withdraw from social situations, especially involving contacts with non-Mennonite students. He also implies that the home, church, and community enterprises may be vital factors in the formation of this attitude. Thus, their orientation toward their family and church may be more important to them than having close peer relationships.

It should be noted that findings from an inventory of this nature are useful mainly as a point of departure for further study. The information it yields should not be accepted at face value or as a final diagnosis, for the responses may be influenced by personal factors or value-systems which the inventory is unable to assess. Fiedler (5) has pointed out that we do not at present possess any method by which we can obtain an objective picture of how an individual "really" is. In this study, for example, the Mennonites may have been more critical of themselves while, on the other hand, the public school adolescents may have been more defensive in expressing their true self-descriptions. Thus, a person's response to an inventory, like his response to any opportunity for revealing himself, may be influenced by his candor. He may respond with tongue in cheek, or answer all the items as candidly as he can. Responses can also be influenced by the person's attitudes toward the items that are presented and possibly to the individual who administers them.

Furthermore, responses to the inventory may be influenced to an undetermined degree by a desire to appear consistent. This can produce exaggerated results in the way one rates both himself and others. Responses of this nature were readily apparent as several of the sub-

jects tended to respond in an almost completely intermediate manner. The most serious problem in interpreting results, however, is that one will always be influenced to a certain degree by his own insight. Thus, no matter how frank the adolescents were in revealing themselves they, nevertheless, differ greatly in their degree of "self-knowledge." This, of course, will differ to the extent to which they have tended to rationalize or critically scrutinize themselves. Perhaps then, the adolescents are not what they say they are.

In closing, it should be emphasized that definite conclusions should not be made from the results of this study. The results, however, have tended to show that there is actually not much difference between the self-concepts of both the Mennonite and the public school adolescents. Their attitudes and aspirations appear to be quite similar. The Mennonites, however, seemed to be less socially oriented than the public school adolescents. They also responded in a more intermediate or less agreeing fashion which tended to support the aforementioned hypothesis. It was assumed here that their response set may have been influenced by their religious values and family background.

REFERENCES

1. Bieri, J. and Lobeck, R. Self-concept differences in relation to identification, religion, and social class. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1961, 62, 94-98.

2. Brownfain, J. Stability of the self-concept as a dimension of personality. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1952, 47, 597-606.

3. Deese, J. Principles of Psychology. Boston: Allyn and Bacon Co., 1964.

4. Edwards, A. L. Experimental design in psychological research. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc. 1960.

5. Fiedler, F. E. A method of objective quantification of certain counter-transference attitudes. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1951, 7, 101-107.

6. Guengerich, P. T. The growth of Mennonite secondary schools in America. Master of Arts Thesis, 1955.

7. Gynther, G. and McDonald, R. Relationship of self and ideal-self descriptions with sex, race, and class in Southern adolescents. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1965, 1, 85-88.

8. Hartzler, J. E. Education among the Mennonites of America. Illinois: Central Mennonite Publishing Board, 1925.

9. Hostetler, J. A. The sociology of Mennonite evangelism. Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1954.

10. Jersild, A. T. The psychology of adolescents. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963.

11. Leary, T. Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality. California: Psychological Consultation Service, 1957.

12. Leichty, M. Family attitudes and self-concept in Vietnamese and U.S. children. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1963, 33, 38-50.

13. Lembright, M. L. and Yamamoto, K. Subcultures and creative thinking: an exploratory comparison between Amish and urban American school children. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1965, 11, 49-64.

14. Nafziger, S. E. Evaluation of the progress of the Iowa Mennonite School, Master of Arts Thesis, 1953.

15. Peters, F. C. Comparison of attitudes and values expressed by Mennonite and Non-Mennonite college students. Manitoba: Manitoba Historical Society, 1959.

16. Rogers, C. R. and Dymond, R. F. Psychotherapy and personality change. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.